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The Misleading Myth of the Equality of Nations

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IN Constantinople, when the Turkish Government during the war had issued orders to occupy the buildings of the American College for Women and had sent its military guard to its gates, Mr. Morgenthau, our Ambassador, rode to the college, hoisted the Embassy flag over its buildings and sent word to the Pasha that the buildings had become the summer residence of the Embassy of the United States and could not be occupied. Thanks to that interference, the American College for Women in Constantinople went through all those years of war without ever losing a recitation or being closed for a day or an hour.

I was not at the Peace Conference in Paris. Now that I look at that august assembly, on which we once thought we saw tongues of flame, representing the plenary-inspiration of the spirit of humanity, it seems to me to have grown somewhat dim, and the idea that anything can be done if you are a member of the League has vanished for me.

The massacres of Armenians in Cilicia, in Marash and at other points which the French have occupied in Cilicia and in the adjoining region are appalling horrors. The aggregate of deaths runs over 60,000. These massacres occurred in regions for which France had assumed full responsibility. The facts are not all before us. No final judgment is yet possible. If these massacres were due to a miscalculation, it is a miscalculation which was red with the blood of the innocent. Either France should not have occupied the region or having occupied the territory for which it accepted a mandatory, there should have been enough French soldiers present to protect the

Armenians. In certain cases, the Armenians were disarmed by the French and no French protection was present when the Turkish forces drew near. These are the perils of the attempt of France and of England to enter on duties for which they were not prepared and have faced with insufficient force to maintain order. This in no way diminishes the responsibility of the Turkish forces for these massacres, whether these hideous deeds of blood were the work of Turkish irregulars or of troops under the command of Mustapha Kemal Pasha.

In the Treaty of Sèvres, the United States had no part nor lot. It did not negotiate it. It is not one of the signatories. The secret agreement by which Cilicia and North Syria was allotted to France was concealed from the United States. It can be held responsible for none of the disasters which have attended its execution. From 1895 to 1920, the responsibility for the failure to prevent Armenian massacres has turned upon the refusal of Europe, including England and France, to enforce the Treaty of Berlin when Germany came to the support and protection of Abd-ul-Hamid.

We need to understand that the League of Nations is not a cure-all and that membership in it does not instantly create the power to prevent massacre and to redress injustice. This has to be based on a broader foundation. It needs to be based on the realities of life, and what I am about to say in regard to the Misleading Myth of the Equality of Nations will, I feel certain, be accepted in precise proportion as any one of my readers has come in immediate and practical contact

with the conduct of affairs and the actual relations and authority of nations.

The foreign policy of President Harding's administration has already gone far to establish the fact that the overwhelming vote in the last Presidential election did not express opposition to any international organization to preserve the peace of the world, but to the precise constitution for international action presented by President Wilson, refusing all amendments offered in the Senate. The principle of mutual, international action has the support of both parties and of the American people. For the method proposed in the Versailles Treaty, it was not possible to secure the support of even a third of the voters of the United States.

OBJECTIONS TO THE VERSAILLES COVENANT

This crushing verdict against the precise plan presented by President Wilson and not against any agreement whatsoever between nations, was most conspicuously based on the objection to Article X. This was not the only objection. At least two other obstacles to popular American approval existed. One was the equality of all nations, a basic principle of the Covenant. The other was the surrender of international relations on labor issues and questions to an International Conference whose representatives were to be primarily selected by labor unions and not by each government. The Republican national platform in 1920 was the first in our history which authoritatively joined issue on the principle that no organization, not even of labor, can be permitted to decide when law shall be enforced or control the right of the individual man to labor at will under a free contract of his own making. The challenge was

officially accepted by labor organizations and the majority was against them. Laws and the authority of a government chosen by all, must in state, national and international policy be supreme over any and all class organizations.

The equality of nations is another objection to the Versailles Covenant. Nations are not equal in their rights and power. No instrument can make them so. Nations and governments do not possess the inherent rights and powers of individuals.

The declaration of Grotius, that all nations are equal did not make them so. It found them so. In his day, nations were, taken in the large, practically equal. Today they are not. His dictum is like many dicta in theology which time and Providence side-track. The equality of nations remains an agreeable fiction in diplomatic intercourse. It has gone in fact. For over a century the smaller European nations have not shared in that final authority in Europe and its issues, the concert of the Powers. Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Bulgaria and Greece have not for a century been held to be equals to the "Great Powers," neither will the ten or twelve lesser powers created by the war. Switzerland has chosen neutralization.

With the exception of Japan, no African or Asiatic power has been accepted for a century in any Congress or Conference called to settle world issues. No American power but the United States is in fact or action admitted to such a body, when it has responsible work to perform. The agreeable international fiction is maintained that all countries have equal rights and powers, but this is a fiction, not truth. Nor did the presence of small nations at the Hague Conference prove they were equal.

A government is a convenient agency organized and existing for the public good of the human beings within the boundaries of the country on whose behalf it exercises delegated rights of sovereignty. It exists for human beings. Human beings do not exist for it. Many causes and antecedents have decided its boundaries and its powers. For all but six or eight powers, these are constantly changing. This is also true at present of three recent great powers. Russia, Germany and Austria are just at present in a sort of international escrow. They are like individuals who under municipal law have been deprived of the power of contract and the control of their own resources and free-will. We may be certain that 70,000,000 Germans and 90,000,000 Russians will become great powers but not under their existing organization. As to the future of the rest of the wreckage of the war, no one can predict. Who, in 1914, seven short years ago, could have predicted what exists now? When the Versailles Covenant sought to make all nations equal in the Assembly and put four countries, not great powers, on the Council a rotten beam was put into the new international fabric sure to do harm and work evil. The analogy as to individuals is wholly misleading. Every human individual is a spiritual being with inherent rights. What is called a nation is a material accident. Its rights and powers are artificial. It is a corporate entity. Giving Salvador or Argentina, Chile or Canada a vote equal to that of the United States in the Versailles Covenant changes nothing. It may be a graceful courtesy to an historic fiction; an agreeable way to avoid friction; but it remains a fiction and not a reality. Twice the United States has "kindly consented," as they say on play-bills, to sit in a "Pan-American" Congress, at Wash-

ington in 1890 and again in 1899, 1906 and 1910. All were substantial failures. The little nations united against the United States. Nothing was really done that lasted, except minor international issues and problems. Outside the Conference, the United States was a great power. Inside it was impotent.

THE PERILS SMALL POWERS CREATE

The status of small powers in fact and in practice is pretty well established. Already they are protected. This war was fought, in a sense, to protect a small power, Belgium. The small powers are treated with great politeness. All diplomacy is soaked through and through with the legal fiction of equality. But when serious issues come and the sky darkens and lands rise up at the sound of war and great issues are afoot, diplomatic fictions vanish at the thunder of the guns and the great powers dominate, govern and decide.

This recognition of great powers as the final arbiters of the fate of all war became a visible reality in the Great War. No place can be clear or safe, without this recognition. This supremacy of the Great Powers that survived is an inevitable evolution. In the conflict, Russia, Germany and Austria went by the board. Five Great Powers survived, England, France, Italy, Japan and the United States. Of these, only three have any real power and authority at sea. France and Italy doubtless have fleets. Italy won a naval victory of importance. Neither has a naval program. Neither can maintain a first-class fleet of the present standard. Sea power is in the unquestioned hands of England, Japan and the United States. None other could challenge this united authority at sea. These three can enforce any policy they please, if they choose so to

do. Two of them, England and the United States could drive any and all flags from the sea and close every port. They alone can bring peace on all the seven seas and stop war at the water's edge of every continent.

This may be a disagreeable truth to many nations. It may seem to publicists, pillowed on ancient traditions and outworn forms, an arrogant truth. But truth it is, none the less and nothing is likely to alter it at present. The lesser nations all had fleets once. They are gone. The Council of the League would be stronger, if it had the five great powers alone. The presence of others means intrigue and hollow pretense. The Assembly of the Covenant has no real power, because it has no real equality. The difference between its various members in real strength is one of kind and not of degree.

The worst of it is that these various weaker countries of differing population and territory large or small, all have the perilous right and power to declare war and set the world in flames. The Great War began with Balkan conflicts which even the great powers could not prevent and once begun the world is left close to fatal ruin. The weaker powers no longer have fleets worth anything. Why should they have armies? If Germany is disarmed, why not all these "powers," without real power. Would a house be made safer because the little folk had the freedom of all the match-boxes? How often in the past century have these lesser governments proved irresponsible? How many wars have been due to the rash acts, the weak administration, the disorder of the weak powers, who are able to precipitate war but not to win it? Why continue this misleading myth which slays and destroys the peoples for whom these war-creating, but not war-winning powers, exist.

The final decision in war and in peace, as was proven in the last war, rests with the "Great Powers" and the "Great Powers" alone.

No international agreement can ever work which does not recognize this fact and principle from the start. An artificial creation, like the Versailles Covenant, able, lofty in conception, a prophecy of the future, is weak at this point. If instead, an international agreement is created, as President Harding proposes, by successive precedents, by trial and error, by following things as they are, we shall have at the end a real, central, world, executive, committee in which the great powers direct international affairs and the powers, which are not great powers, will live happily ever after, free from the burdens of fleets and armies, protected, left at peace, developing in their own free way. This situation has already come in fact. Why not recognize it in national and international policy? No real and permanent progress can be made except by accepting realities.

THE LOGIC OF "SELF-DETERMINATION"

Every "people" or "race" with definite boundaries, in which it has a clear majority, has a right to a separate sovereign existence. This right is now universally recognized. For Europe, it is both recognized and acted upon by the Treaty of Versailles. This is the moral judgment of mankind. Fleets and armies can not deny this right or render it null. How strong this moral power has become, in this, our day, Ireland displays day by day. The moral strength of this right has become more powerful than the strength of armies and the thunder of fleets.

But this right to independent sovereignty does not necessarily carry the

right to an army, a fleet or the power to declare war. Our states are all sovereignties; but they have wisely foregone these rights and powers. What a mess this Continent would be in, if our 48 states each had an army, a fleet and could declare war. How much safer they are without these powers and rights. Several native states in India enjoy sovereignty, but they can not declare war. So with a number of "independent" states, each a sovereignty, but powerless and protected.

Why not recognize as law and a basis for international action, what is already an accomplished fact? What a farce "war" is for Cuba, Hayti, Santo Domingo and the Central American States. Mexico can not defend itself,

as was shown by the success of French occupation in 1861 until the United States acted. By our might, Latin America has its "independence." Each of these countries from Salvador up, would be better off without armies, fleets or the power to declare war.

If small lands, races or peoples, wish to share in these perilous burdens and their inevitable responsibilities, let them merge themselves in a great power. If they prefer identity and sovereignty, let them have that and leave war to their biggers.

But let us have no more of this Misleading Myth of the Equality of Nations, which sows the seeds of war, but can not reap the fruits of victory.

This reality is a solution even for the Irish problem.

The United States and International Government

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IN beginning this discussion I want frankly to confess that to my mind the League of Nations which has been proposed to America is a dangerous proposition. It seems to me to be wholly un-American. It is claimed that it is a step in the development of international relations; to my mind it is a step backward, a step in the wrong, the un-American, direction. We have been told that it is a half loaf of bread, which is better than no bread at all; but to my mind it is a half loaf of bread which contains fatal poison. Hence, I would like to present what seems to me an American experiment in internationalism, and to contrast it with this old world, European, retroactive experiment in which our Republic of the new world is so pressingly invited to participate.

THE AMERICAN EXPERIMENT

The American experiment in internationalism began in Philadelphia in 1787. It was attempted on a world stage in 1899 and 1907 at the Hague, and there are thousands, perhaps millions, of Americans who devoutly hope that President Harding's administration will take up again that American experiment for the world and press it through to a successful conclusion.

I need scarcely say that in opposing the League of Nations I am not a "bitter ender." I need scarcely say that the super-nationalism, the ultra-nationalism of some of the American opponents of the League of Nations makes no appeal whatsoever to me. I believe implicitly in the philosophy of *noblesse oblige*. I believe that, be-